Chapter 4: Implementation of Curriculum and Instructional Practices

Districts aiming to improve foreign language programs must undertake a systematic review of current programs. Specifically, districts must review the goals, curricula, and instructional strategies and practices in place. Working collaboratively, curriculum leaders modify goals and expected outcomes for students as necessary.

The Use of Instructional Goals to Improve Programs

The suggested goals and benchmarks found in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of this document should assist the review process. In implementing this process, educators may find it helpful to take the following steps:

1. Begin with the end in mind. Effective curriculum planning begins by looking at the program as a whole. Establish expected student outcomes at the main junctures in the program, such as at the end of the first and at the end of the second year. Planners should ask a series of questions to narrow the focus of the planning, such as What should students know and be able to do:

    • At the end of the entire language program?

    • At the end of each course?

    • At the end of each unit?

    • At the end of each daily lesson?

2. Define appropriate objectives that will enable students to learn a new language.

3. Identify expected student outcomes on which to focus the entire program, units of instruction, and individual lessons.

4. Define key benchmarks for expected student outcomes.

5. Decide on instructional strategies. Effective teachers use a combination of proven successful teaching practices to enable students to communicate successfully in another language.

6. Decide on methods of assessment (see Chapter 5). The teacher needs to determine to what degree the students have learned and can perform the skills or demonstrate the knowledge presented. Three critical purposes are met through assessment:

- By using entry-level assessment for instructional planning, teachers can determine the students' skill level through the use of indicators of foreign language proficiency before instruction.

- By using progress/monitoring methods, teachers can determine whether students are making adequate progress toward acquiring the skills and the concepts described in instructional objectives.

- By using summative assessment, teachers can determine the effectiveness of instruction and students' proficiency after instruction.

7. Select appropriate instructional materials. The textbook is the core of the program. Supplemental resources are age-appropriate fiction and nonfiction literature, newspapers, magazines, television programs, realia, the Internet, videos, and dictionaries in the foreign language.

8. Verify articulation. Curriculum leaders should be aware of the connections between elementary school, middle school, and high school language programs. In addition, curriculum leaders should foster connections between teachers at the same site who are teaching at the same levels of instruction and should assist language teachers in knowing what is being taught in other content areas.

Guidelines for Systematic Instruction

Instruction in foreign language classes must be systematic. Systematic instruction involves a carefully planned program, delivery that implements the objectives to be learned, and selection and placement in sequence of the essential skills and strategies that are necessary to achieving those objectives. In implementing systematic instruction, teachers should:

- Allocate sufficient time to essential skills.

- Organize information to minimize confusion that learners may experience.

- Introduce new information in manageable and sequential units.

- Identify prerequisite skills and build on the prior knowledge of the learner.

- Review previously taught skills.

- Integrate old knowledge strategically with new knowledge.

- Progress from skills in more easily managed contexts to more complex contexts.

- Include modifications, as necessary, for special-needs students.

Through systematic instruction, teachers deliver lessons by providing comprehensible input and by modeling the target language while using appropriate materials. They then lead students in guided practice of the content and grammar. Teachers monitor students' performances by checking for students' understanding when they provide comprehensible input, when they lead students in guided practice, and when they assess students' responses.

Comprehensible Input

Teachers model language in a way that is appropriate to a unit by telling stories, by demonstrating activities, and by using visuals. The students' role is to listen, to comprehend, and to respond appropriately. Three major aspects of language comprehension are vocabulary (words, phrases, idioms); ways of expressing language functions (requesting, apologizing, showing anger, complimenting); and cultural conventions (taboo words, euphemisms, culture-specific connotations). Students learn to comprehend a wide range of content and functions more quickly than they learn to produce the same range of language. Therefore, students' understanding of the language is always ahead of their ability to produce the language.

Guided Practice

During guided practice students participate in listening, reading, writing, and speaking activities that the teacher closely supervises. The teacher guides the practice on the basis of the students' performance. The result may prompt the teacher to give assistance to those students

who are having difficulty, to provide information and explanation to some or all students, to change the activity or pace, and to change the focus of communication. Exercises and drills are organized around a given situation and are designed to lead to communication tasks as quickly as possible.

Interactive Communication Activities

It is important for teachers to provide foreign language students with ample opportunity to practice communication. Through such practice students can make significant progress in dealing with everyday life situations in the target language. The language practiced by students should be appropriate to cultural situations. In structuring interactive communication the teacher supervises small-group activities. In doing so the teacher must ensure that:

- The objectives are precisely stated.
- The directions for the learning tasks are clear.
- Materials called for are readily accessible. Such materials can be tapes, cassettes, films, filmstrips, video components, books, magazines, charts, maps, pictures, realia, and handouts.

The Monitoring of Students' Performances

Students cannot apply, use, or extend skills that they do not possess. Students' performances can be monitored in many ways. For example, while providing comprehensible input, the teacher verifies that students understand. During guided practice the teacher corrects students' pronunciation and grammar. During interactive communication activities the teacher evaluates students' performances in relation to established benchmarks and performance guidelines. Students are evaluated to determine whether the objectives of a lesson have been adequately achieved. If the objectives are stated clearly, the teacher evaluates the extent to which students' performances achieve the objectives. An analysis of students' performance data, including curriculum-embedded test results, aids the teacher in identifying those students who have achieved mastery and those students who have not. In this way the teacher is aware of which

students require further instruction in the material. If students cannot perform as expected, additional practice with different approaches or perhaps more language input is required. It is important that teachers monitor students' performances on an ongoing basis.

Extended Learning Opportunities

The foreign language teacher structures extended learning opportunities beyond the classroom. Examples of extended learning opportunities are engaging in service learning activities, completing homework, using the Internet, interacting with businesses and the community, and participating in exchanges.

By engaging in service learning activities, older students who are proficient in the target language become mentors to younger students who are learning the language. During such projects immersion students often become mentors to elementary students.

Teachers assign homework that allows students to practice and reinforce skills acquired in the foreign language class. Homework can consist of reading (if sufficient preparation has been given); writing letters; summarizing reading material; writing a television weather report; listening to extra dialogues, books on tapes, anecdotes, advertisements, telephone calls, instructions; learning and practicing newly introduced vocabulary, orally and in writing; learning idioms; performing recorded guided practice tasks; performing grammar, syntax, and sentence structure drills; practicing communication with peers or native speakers, in person or over the phone; and listening to foreign language songs and memorizing lyrics.

Teachers assign projects for finding information on the Internet, either as a part of a lesson or as research at home. Examples of such projects are connecting with classrooms around the world in which the target language is spoken; comparing the use of technology in California with its use in another country in which the target language is spoken; writing a story in the target language; using audiovisual technologies to correct or enhance pronunciation of words in the target language; and conducting research about the target culture online. Teachers arrange for students to intern for local agencies or businesses whose clientele speaks the target language, thereby improving students' language skills. Teachers assign research projects in the

communities in which the target language is spoken. They arrange exchanges of messages in the target language through the Internet. (Please note that teachers should monitor students' Internet exchanges.)

Extended learning opportunities also consist of the exchange of students from one country to another. Such exchanges provide students with the opportunity to communicate with native speakers of the language and to experience firsthand the culture they have studied. Persons interested in exchange programs can contact the following agencies for further information:

- Council on Standards for International Educational Travel <*http://www.csiet.org*>

- Council on International Educational Exchange <*http://www.councilexchanges.org*>

- National Association for Foreign Student Affairs <*http://www.nafsa.org/*>

- Institute of International Education <*http://www.iie.org*>

Provision of Appropriate Resources

The most important resource in the foreign language class is a competent teacher. This competence is demonstrated when teachers possess content knowledge, a high level of proficiency in the language and information about the culture to be learned, and the skills necessary to deliver effective instruction. To hone these skills, teachers must have access to ongoing professional development.

Technology enhances language learning, which aids students in strengthening linguistic skills, establishing relations with peers, and learning about contemporary culture and everyday life in countries in which the target language is spoken. Examples of the use of technology are showing diagrams on an overhead projector, playing audio recordings, producing a video, teleconferencing, or holding a multilingual videoconference by satellite. Teachers identify the available technologies, determine the application they may have, and then decide how best to incorporate them into the instructional program. Technologies that may be appropriate are computer-assisted instruction, interactive video, CD-ROM, e-mail, and the Internet.

Other resources are text materials, both basic and supplemental. Supplemental materials are fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, essays, advertisements, articles, films, and multimedia written originally in a language other than English for native speakers and readers of that language. Finally, the community is an important resource for foreign language students: students can interact with native speakers and learn about their cultures firsthand without ever leaving California.

Library Media Connections to Foreign Language Instruction

Ongoing collaborative efforts between foreign language teachers and library media teachers facilitate the integration of foreign languages into the curriculum. Such efforts provide students with opportunities to discover quality literature and other resources in the language learned.

The specialized training of library media teachers in selecting quality books and other library resources is critical to developing the library collection. School library collections provide students with access to foreign language dictionaries and reference books that contain information about various cultures. Examples of other materials found in the library media center are audio resources (music, folksongs, and stories narrated in the various languages); videos; realia (objects used to relate classroom teaching to real life) from various cultures for display and study; and subscriptions to magazines and newspapers in the target language.

Partnerships between foreign language teachers and library media teachers also foster the integration of the instruction and the practice of information literacy skills with content-rich research projects, thereby enabling students to become effective users of information. Research projects are an effective means of providing this instruction and practice. In addition, using a school library media center to display students' projects created in foreign language classes serves to advertise foreign language programs and to stir interest in these courses. One example of a possible research project involves students in a French class who plan an imaginary trip to Paris. Each student researches information about a particular part of the city to present to the class. Students find historical facts, descriptions of important sites, and information on costs. The class produces a videotape, narrated in French, as a travel guide to Paris.

In short, foreign language teachers and library media teachers should use their shared talents to foster students' learning, improve academic achievement, and create new possibilities of personal enrichment.

Multiple Entry Points and Extended Sequence of Study

Foreign language programs in California begin at various grade levels, devote various amounts of time to instruction, and extend for various lengths of time. For example, many districts introduce foreign language learning in middle school and continue instruction into high school. Elsewhere, programs may begin in elementary school. Some districts offer dual-immersion programs beginning at the kindergarten level. In these programs, English and non-English speaking students are taught both in English and in the second language. Individual school programs will use the framework to fit local circumstances.

The California *Education Code* stipulates that foreign languages be offered no later than grade seven: "The adopted course of study for grades 7 to 12, inclusive, shall offer courses in the following areas of study. . . . Foreign language or languages, beginning not later than grade 7, designed to develop a facility for understanding, speaking, reading, and writing the particular language" (sections 51220 and 51220c).

Nevertheless, California students typically begin foreign language study in high school. The largest number of students begin foreign language instruction at the high school level, a smaller number of students in grades five through eight, and the fewest number of students in the primary grades. Students study English–language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and the arts throughout their school careers; they need to have the same sustained opportunity for attaining foreign language proficiency through an extended sequence of study.

Universal Access to the Foreign Language Curriculum

The diversity of California students presents unique opportunities and significant challenges for instruction. Students come to school with a wide variety of skills, abilities, and interests as well as varying proficiencies in English and other languages. The wider the variation of the

student population in each classroom, the more complex becomes the teacher's role in organizing high-quality curricula and instruction in foreign languages and in ensuring that each student has access to instruction according to the student's current level of achievement. The state of California has foreign language programs in schools so that all students become literate in another language. Achieving this goal requires high-quality curricula and instruction. Toward that end teachers need assistance in assessing and using the results of that assessment to plan programs, differentiate the curriculum and the instruction, use grouping strategies effectively, and implement other strategies to meet the needs of students who receive special education services, advanced learners, and English learners.

Instruction of Students Who Have Special Needs

Students who are eligible to receive special education services often have specific needs that are described in an individualized education plan (IEP). Teachers should review each child's IEP to be aware of classroom accommodations and modifications and the availability of special education services. This review helps teachers ensure that strategies and activities are aligned with the requirements of the student's IEP.

Assistive devices may be available to students who have special physical needs to help them learn a foreign language. Such devices are wheelchairs, walkers, tape recorders, sound-amplification devices, and regular or braille word processors. These resources can accommodate students' physical challenges so that the foreign language is accessible.

Specific learning disabilities that manifest as deficits in students' use of their primary language may also create difficulties in students' learning a second language. The pedagogical approach recommended in this framework emphasizes systematic and explicit instruction, frequent assessment, and appropriate modification of the curriculum. Some students who have learning disabilities may have difficulty in processing oral or written language. For these students a thorough diagnosis of what they can and cannot do is helpful. With the assistance of learning specialists, foreign language teachers can implement specific strategies that might consist of changes in the sequence of instruction, the methods of instruction, the pacing of

instruction, or the materials used. The strategies might also encompass variations in assessment techniques (e.g., giving students who process or produce written language more slowly more time to take a test). Regardless of the modifications made, however, educators should always place their attention on helping students learn the foreign language to the best of the students' ability and assessing the students' progress in achieving mastery.

Experienced teachers develop a repertoire of successful instructional strategies to be used in special situations or with specific groups of students. Many of the strategies can be explicitly taught or can be embedded in the instructional materials to help teachers plan instruction. To establish successful instructional strategies for students, teachers should:

- Establish a safe and supportive environment in which the students are encouraged to talk and ask questions freely when they do not understand.

- Use a variety of ways to explain a concept or an assignment. When appropriate, the concept or the assignment may be depicted in graphic or pictorial form, with manipulatives, or with real objects to accompany oral and written instructions.

- Provide assistance in the specific and general vocabulary to be used for each lesson before the lesson and provide reinforcement or additional practice time after the lesson. Instructional resources and instruction should be monitored for ambiguities or language that would be confusing, such as idioms.

- Set up tutoring situations that offer additional assistance. Tutoring by a qualified teacher is optimal. Peer or cross-age tutoring should be designed so as not to detract from the instructional time of either the tutor or the tutee and should be supervised.

- Enlist the help of parents at home when possible.

- Establish special sessions to prepare students for unfamiliar testing situations.

- Ask each student frequently to communicate his or her understanding of the concept or assignment. Students should be asked to verbalize or to write down what they know, thereby providing immediate insight into their thinking and level of understanding. In

addition, students should be encouraged to confer about each other's understanding of the concept being taught and the class work or homework assignments.

- Check frequently for understanding in a variety of ways. When a student does not understand, analyze why.

- Allow students to demonstrate their understanding and abilities in a variety of ways while reinforcing modes of communication.

- Vary strategies to ensure that curriculum and instruction are appropriately challenging. Pacing, an approach through which the teacher slows down or speeds up instruction, can be a simple and effective strategy.

- Focus on the key concepts and eliminate confusing activities or variables. Lessons should be organized and sequential to ensure that instructional time is used to help students understand the fundamental concepts and develop needed skills.

Educators may visit the following Web sites to obtain resources for understanding and addressing the needs of students who have disabilities:

- "California Special Education Programs: A Composite of Laws Database," *Education Code,* Part 30, Other Related Laws and *California Code of Regulations, Title 5*

    <http://www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/sed/lawsreg2.htm>

- A Composite of Laws, 2002, 24th Edition

    <http://www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/sed/compordr.htm>

To order a copy, call CDE Press at (800) 995-4099

Instruction of Advanced Learners

Advanced learners are students who perform or are capable of performing in a foreign language at a level that is significantly above the performance level of their peers. Advanced learners may be students who have been formally identified by a school district as gifted and talented as defined in *Education Code* Section 52200. They may also be students who have not been formally identified as gifted and talented but who demonstrate outstanding capacity or actual performance in a foreign language. Progressing rapidly along the Language Learning

Continuum, studying topics in more depth, and studying related topics that are not covered in the regular curriculum accelerate advanced learners' academic achievements in foreign languages.

Advanced students often benefit from a variety of teaching strategies that make curriculum and instruction appropriately challenging. The strategies for modification of curriculum and instruction for advanced learners may consist of pacing, depth, complexity, and novelty. The pace of instruction for advanced learners can be accelerated if the assessment indicates a mastery of significant portions of the foreign language being studied. Modifying instruction as to complexity requires more training and skill on the part of the teacher and the provision of instructional materials and activities that lend themselves to such variations. For advanced students it means enriched instruction that encourages students to go into more depth by addressing topics, time periods, or connections across disciplines not normally expected at that level of language development. Students may become more involved in the culture and the novelties of the language being studied by reading appropriate literature and magazine or newspaper articles and by attending plays and musical concerts that highlight the culture of the target language.

Instruction of English Learners

English learners benefit from foreign language instruction. They should have the opportunity to study their heritage language in a formal, academic setting or to learn a third or fourth language in addition to English.

Given students' differing academic backgrounds and the possible similarities or differences between the heritage language and the foreign language, some students will progress quickly along the Language Learning Continuum. Other students may require additional language support. Teachers should be aware of students' knowledge of English and students' transfer of language skills, such as reading, from one language to another. Instructional programs should be planned according to the students' proficiency in English, in the heritage language, and in the foreign language.

English learners enrolled in heritage language programs have usually attained a high level of listening and speaking skills, but they often need to improve their skills in reading and writing. Instruction may need to focus on academic vocabulary, linguistic structures, and language conventions.

Multiple Languages

School districts need to offer as many languages as possible. The wider the range of choices, the more likely that California will produce graduates with proficiency in second and even third languages. These students will also have knowledge of more than one culture other than their own.

Classical Languages

Learning classical languages is a valuable experience for California students of all ages and backgrounds. The canon of works by Greek and Roman philosophers, poets, historians, and playwrights helps students understand the intellectual and literary roots of American government and society. Classes in Latin and ancient Greek are a vital component of many foreign language programs.

Learning classical languages involves the same skills as learning modern languages, but the prioritizing of classical language skills differs markedly. Reading becomes the primary objective, which is supported by limited skills in listening, speaking, and writing. Grammar is taught formally, and the structure of the target language is emphasized and compared to English. Emphasis is placed on reading and listening comprehension and interpretive skills and less on interpersonal communication. Therefore, the important goals of classical language study are the development of reading skills in the target language, the close study of works of ancient literature, and the creation of a deep understanding of the target culture.

When students read Latin literature, they are communicating with the ancient world in the most direct way possible. Latin provides a useful base for learning how many European languages work. Approximately 70 percent of the vocabulary of formal English and 90 percent

of the vocabulary of Spanish are based on Latin. Students increase their vocabulary in a systematic manner by learning the principles of word building and by studying the derivation of words and common prefixes and suffixes. In addition, many students who study a classical language often become proficient in one of the modern languages. Spanish-speaking or French-speaking students can learn the linguistic heritage of their native language. Exploring the interrelationships of the languages also strengthens proficiency. These students develop a powerful array of communicative competencies and gain access to information and ideas.

Heritage Languages

In many schools the presence of large groups of students with home backgrounds in such languages as Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish has led to the establishment of special courses designed to develop and maintain the language abilities of these students. Instruction in heritage languages is also supported by local community efforts, such as Saturday programs and after-school programs that offer courses in Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, and Hebrew.

Language courses that help to strengthen the heritage of persons and community members living in California merit consideration as a part of the foreign language curriculum. Although it is crucial for students who speak a heritage language to develop proficiency in English, it is also beneficial for them to continue developing skills in their native language and even in a third language.

For example, students who have well-developed oral language skills but underdeveloped literacy skills in Chinese do not benefit greatly from an introductory Chinese course. These students would profit more from a native-language development course. First, such courses help students make the transition from a colloquial to a more formal command of the language. Second, students' self-esteem is often raised when students increase competency in the language spoken at home and when they realize that such competency is valued by a respected educational institution. Finally, all foreign language students benefit when heritage language courses are offered. By building on skills that heritage language speakers bring to the classroom, these

courses can become prototypes for advanced language classes—models for the high proficiency levels to which all foreign language students can aspire.

American Sign Language

Linguists have recognized American Sign Language (ASL) as a language in its own right. It is a rule-governed language that has the system and the scope of any oral language; it has its own complex phonology, morphology, syntax, and structure of discourse.

In addition to students who are deaf or hard of hearing, students without hearing loss may enroll in ASL courses. When students without hearing loss enroll in these courses, deaf or hard of hearing students become less isolated from the social and economic mainstream. Their confidence and self-esteem can rise. Students without a hearing loss also gain a valuable skill and learn general lessons about the nature of language as a communication tool.

The major objectives of instruction in ASL resemble those of any language: to enable students to communicate in the target language and to become aware of all aspects of the culture of the people whose language they are learning. Through these courses hearing students also may be made aware of career options in the field of deafness, such as teaching the deaf or interpreting sign language.

California *Education Code* stipulates that taking ASL courses counts toward graduation requirements:

> (a) Commencing with the 1988-89 school year, no pupil shall receive a diploma of graduation from high school who, while in grades 9 to 12, inclusive, has not completed all of the following:
>
> (1) At least the following numbers of courses in the subjects specified, each course having a duration of one year, unless otherwise specified. . . .
>
> (E) One course in visual or performing arts or foreign language. For the purposes of satisfying the requirement specified in this subparagraph, a course in American Sign Language shall be deemed a course in foreign language (Section 51225.3).

American Sign Language also meets the foreign language entrance requirement of The California State University and the University of California systems (*Futures: Making High*

School Count! 2002). By learning ASL students gain a deeper appreciation of deaf culture while developing a better understanding of their own language and culture.

Less Commonly Taught Languages

Many people throughout the world speak such languages as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Russian. These languages are spoken in countries that are of strategic importance to the United States and have economic ties to California. They are being taught more frequently in California today than in the past. However, attaining proficiency in these languages can take longer than attaining proficiency in other modern languages: English speakers may find it challenging to learn languages with a different writing system. Therefore, it is important that students have a long sequence of study in the less commonly taught languages. In addition, experience with these languages allows students to learn more about English. For example, when students of Russian understand that the past tense requires another set of case endings, they compare the new language system to their own.